



## Chapter 7

## ENVIRONMENT & CONSERVATION

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Consolidate eleven Bureau of Environment divisions into eight for efficiency and to eliminate redundant processes within the department and restructure division reporting to facilitate greater consistency across field offices.
- Add an Office of External Relations to improve customer service and better coordinate with local governments, regulated entities, NGOs and other state agencies.
- Retool the Office of Environmental Assistance to increase efforts to promote energy efficiency, sustainable business practices and voluntary environmental initiatives for overall quality of life and wellness.
- Utilize LEAN process management to improve efficiency in permitting, enforcement, grants and parks processes to reduce cost, increase quality and improve customer service.
- Support and strengthen fiscal self-sufficiency of state parks' revenue generating operations.

### INTRODUCTION

The Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) serves the state by safeguarding the health and safety of Tennessee citizens from environmental hazards; protecting and improving the quality of Tennessee's land, air and water; and managing the Tennessee State Parks system. A wide spectrum of department work supports greater sustainability through core activities that ensure compliance with environmental laws, rules, and regulations. The department also promotes corporate and personal actions beyond baseline regulatory requirements.

The department is the chief environmental and natural resource regulatory agency in Tennessee. It has delegated responsibility from the U.S. EPA to regulate sources of air pollution, water pollution, solid and hazardous waste radiological health issues, underground storage tanks, water supply and groundwater. TDEC has eight (8)

environmental field offices across the state and also offers a program of grants and loans to assist local communities with the development and maintenance of drinking water and wastewater infrastructure as well as solid waste disposal, waste prevention, plus programs for recycling, parks, greenways and trails. We promote both front-end environmental education and strong, effective enforcement.

The department manages 53 state parks and 82 state natural areas encompassing more than 185,000 acres across Tennessee - ranging from rustic natural and historic sites to resort parks with 6 inns, 8 restaurants, 4 marinas and the 9 golf courses on the Tennessee Golf Trail. Tennessee State Parks attract more than 25 million visits each year, and University of Tennessee research estimates state parks produce a direct annual economic impact of more than \$725 million, while also supporting more than 12,000 jobs in communities across Tennessee. TDEC is responsible for conserving and promoting the historical, natural and archaeological heritage of Tennessee while also providing support and assistance to local governments for local parks and recreation programs.

The department has more than 2,900 employees working across Tennessee in full-time, part-time or seasonal positions. The department operates on a FY12 budget of approximately \$340 million while utilizing a variety of funding sources to fulfill its regulatory mission: 42 percent of funding comes from dedicated fees and state parks revenue; 34 percent of funding comes from federal sources; and 24 percent of funding comes from state general fund.

## APPROACH/METHODOLOGY

The department's Top to Bottom Review focused on identifying a range of actions to achieve greater efficiencies and improved customer service in all aspects of work at TDEC. The initiative utilized a variety of tools to solicit input from external stakeholders and department employees throughout the review process: more than 1,200 TDEC employees and 1,000 external stakeholders representing the regulated community, local government officials, non-

governmental organizations and outside experts provided feedback, insights and direction. Work groups for the three TDEC bureaus (Environment, Parks & Conservation and Administrative Services) led by their respective commissioner, analyzed current operations and developed recommendations affecting organizational structure, technology and communications, work processes, human resources and culture. An advisory board composed of individuals representing key external stakeholders and other partner agencies served as a sounding board for the department during the process. The work groups produced a set of priority recommendations for the TDEC Executive Committee, and the Executive Committee compiled TDEC's proposed plan for consideration by the Governor's Office.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Recommendation 1:** Ensure a fair, predictable, timely and transparent permitting process by reviewing the existing permitting process and by using LEAN process improvement principles to eliminate inefficiencies and improve customer service.

**Discussion:** Businesses, industries and local governments are required by state and federal environmental regulations to treat air and water before discharging it to the environment, and they are also required to properly dispose of the waste that they generate. For business and industry to compete nationally and internationally, Tennessee must have permitting processes that are practical in application, environmentally protective and issued in a timely manner. Ensuring fair, predictable, timely and transparent permitting will help Tennessee retain existing business and attract new business while being protective of the environment.

**Recommendation 2:** Maximize small business guidance and assistance by evaluating the Small Business Environmental Assistance Program to determine how the resources in this program may be best utilized to help small businesses with environmental compliance and sustainability efforts.



**Discussion:** The department will review all options for marketing environmental assistance to small businesses including web applications, partnering with the Department of Economic and Community Development and using our new Office of External Affairs.

**Recommendation 3:** Review enforcement procedure for violations of environmental statutes and regulations.

**Discussion:** Ensure that the department is practicing fair and consistent environmental enforcement across the state and across all media.

**Recommendation 4:** Improve the grant issuance process by reducing unnecessary complexities and burdensome conditions in grant writing, while also improving public awareness of grant availability.

**Discussion:** TDEC receives funding from federal and state government and from fees that can be utilized to improve treatment and management of environmental issues, clean-up soil, surface water and waste water, and build recreational facilities. By improving the grant issuance process, the department can maximize opportunities to use these funds while ensuring all federal and state regulations are met.

**Recommendation 5:** Evaluate the inspection processes used by all divisions with the goal of performing efficient, thorough and consistent inspections, as well as using the inspection to help the regulated community better understand and comply with environmental regulations.

**Discussion:** The department conducts inspections to ensure protection and public health, and that environmental statutes and rules are followed. Each division within the department will prioritize the types of inspections it performs and schedule each inspection type for review and improvement.

**Recommendation 6:** Increase the effectiveness of the public notice process.

**Discussion:** Currently state statutes and rules that require the public to be informed about permits and environmental clean-ups also require that public notice in local newspapers be used to inform local citizens. Because the department believes it is important to inform the local community about environmental issues in their neighborhood, the department hopes that improving the public notification process will increase its customer service. Allowing the department to use alternate forms of public notice will reduce the costs associated with publication of public notices in newspapers. The department aims to develop opportunities to improve the public notice process and identify other avenues available for public notice (i.e. social media, list-serve distribution, online newspapers, etc.).

**Recommendation 7:** Enhance communication and transparency with stakeholders.

**Discussion:** The department must improve its communication with the business community, state and local governments, and the citizens across the state to be an effective environmental agency and to understand citizen interests and concerns. This recommendation includes utilizing available social media tools for outreach, education, and training and providing on-line accessibility of public information such as permits, enforcement, and public notices.



**Recommendation 8:** Increase communication and outreach with local governments.

**Discussion:** The department has many responsibilities that impact state and local governments ranging from regulation of environmental activities, resolving environmental issues, sponsoring activities at state parks, helping existing industries expand and recruiting new industries. To help local governments, and to improve our ability to keep existing industries and businesses as well as recruit new business and industries, the department must be able to provide accurate and timely information to businesses, industries, local governments and the Department of Economic and Community Development. The department aims to utilize existing internal resources to implement an improved communication and outreach program. This includes utilizing the new Office of External Relations to coordinate efforts among the Environmental Divisions, the Department of Economic and Community Development, and local city, county and state government officials.

**Recommendation 9:** Improve administrative support operations for Parks & Conservation field locations (e.g. parks, historical sites) by developing a new structure to include specific Human Resources and Fiscal positions, which will facilitate improved administrative support in the field for individual park units.

**Discussion:** Providing accessible support staff at the same time the department holds individual park units more accountable will produce more empowered Park Managers, and improve customer service from all the staff in the field. This recommendation will result in the better allocation of current resources available within the park system enabling the department to move forward with new key performance initiatives like Green Hospitality Customer Service Training and the LEAN process improvement activities.



**Recommendation 10:** Study the department's ability to use technology to increase efficiency and improve customer service by offering customers the option to use the internet for billing, paying fees, booking state services, as well as submitting permit applications, reporting, and license renewals.

**Discussion:** The use of technology has become commonplace in conducting day-to-day business in both the public and private sectors. By offering these capabilities to our stakeholders, the department could improve customer service, provide the public greater access to information, and streamline labor-intensive departmental processes.

**Recommendation 11:** Establish an effective organizational structure to ensure improved customer service; to help stakeholders and the public receive accurate, timely, and consistent information; and to promote a proactive understanding of environmental stewardship and the real value of sustainable practices.

**Discussion:** One of the most significant challenges identified in our organizational review was a perceived level of inconsistency regarding TDEC actions and communications with some stakeholders. Therefore, the department will be taking a series of actions to improve our coordination, communication and overall responsiveness. This effort will result in the creation of a dedicated External Affairs group and the creation a new position in each field office that will serve as the primary point of contact for the public and stakeholders in a particular TDEC region.

These new department-wide positions will be responsible for outreach to local governments and municipalities, development districts, existing business and industry, potential new business and industry, Department of Economic and Community Development representatives, environmental groups and the general public. In addition, TDEC will also establish an Office of Sustainable Practices. This group will advance a culture of sustainability across the department, state government and with our various partners through an action-based approach to reduce the environmental impact of our own operations, coordinate with key agencies to improve overall government environmental performance, and support best environmental practices among external stakeholders. These key organizational changes are being made and supported by the reallocated existing department resources.

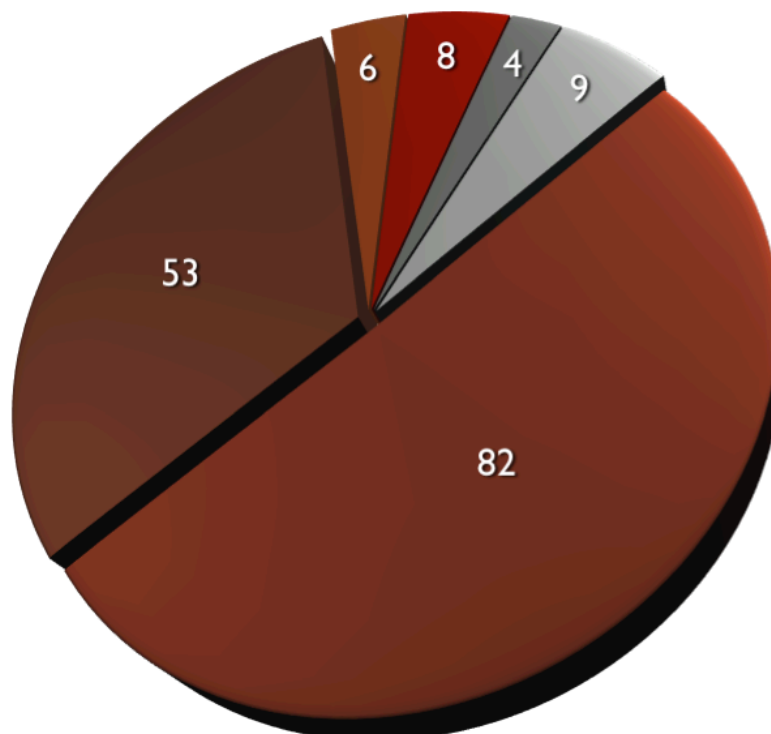
**Recommendation 12:** Flatten the organizational structure of the Bureau of Environment.

**Discussion:** The Bureau of Environment currently has eleven environmental divisions. With the elimination of the Bureau of Environment Senior Directors and the need to have consistency across the water, land, air radiation protection and remediation programs, the department will consolidate the divisions within the Bureau of

Environment. The department will combine divisions regulating similar media to consolidate its operations, insure consistency in its operation, improve communication between the Deputy Commissioner of Environment and the environmental division directors, improve communication between the department and the environmental boards, improve its relationship with industry, business and local and state government and improve its relationship with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

**Recommendation 13:** Consolidate the Bureau of Environment organizational structure by eliminating the Senior Director positions, which will create a direct line of communication between the Deputy Commissioner and the Environmental Division Directors.

**Discussion:** Currently the Bureau of Environment has a two tiered management structure with a Deputy Commissioner for Environment, four Senior Directors, eleven Environmental Division Directors and eight Environmental Field Office Managers. This structure slows communication up and down the chain of command. The direct relationship between the Deputy Commissioner and the Environmental Division Directors is critical to



## Tennessee State Parks System

- Natural Areas
- State Parks
- Inns
- Restaurants
- Marinas
- Golf Courses

• **Annual Economic Impact**  
\$725,000,000

• **Jobs Supported Statewide**  
12,000

• **25 Million Visits Per Year**



consistent and efficient operations within the department. In addition, Field Office Director positions will be eliminated and field office personnel will report directly to the Environmental Division Directors.

**Recommendation 14:** Consolidate Tennessee State Parks' Hospitality Operations and Park Operations lines of authority so park units can operate more effectively under unified authority.

**Discussion:** Previous divisions within the parks system of Hospitality and Park Operations prevented open communication and the establishment of common goals for the park system as a whole. By creating single business units within park operations, the department can be more effective in meeting its mission and save approximately \$100,000.

**Recommendation 15:** Restructure the Parks and Conservation central office to ensure roles and functions match the department's current strategy and emphasis on performance, efficiency and accountability.

**Discussion:** Organizing around function best meets the needs of the individual park units and offers greater opportunities for open communication, interpreting the park stories, protecting natural and cultural resources and increasing revenue-generating capability. This will result in an anticipated savings of approximately \$350,000.

**Recommendation 16:** Create a consistent and effective environmental investigation and clean-up program by consolidating all environmental investigation and remediation responsibilities, including Brownfield Agreements, into one division.

**Discussion:** Currently, the department has sixteen different environmental investigation and clean-up programs in three different environmental divisions. The department will combine three different remediation programs currently under two different divisions into one consolidated unit. The Underground Storage Tank Division will remain a separate division within the department.

**Recommendation 17:** Maintain and improve state park assets with the development of a comprehensive State Parks System Master Plan.

**Discussion:** The state parks facilities, like many other state buildings, have a serious backlog of deferred capital maintenance issues. We are developing a multi-phase, multi-year major maintenance and capital plan for state parks. Fundamental in this strategy is taking care of our current locations and existing park assets first. Impact analysis of high revenue-generating facilities (inns, cabins, restaurants and campgrounds) will determine the likely return on investment opportunities and help establish priorities for upgrades. This action highlights projects that are a priority for the department, such as the busiest campgrounds in our system that do not have ungraded 50-amp electric service, and the high-volume Fall Creek Falls State Park Inn, and other amenities that are antiquated and in need of significant capital improvements. Year one of the plan is included in the FY13 budget proposal as first step in a five year plan.

**Recommendation 18:** Convert some full-time positions (e.g. Hospitality Workers, Conservation Workers) to "job share" positions to provide greater staffing flexibility so management is able to match staffing to actual visitor and guest demands at state parks amenities.

**Discussion:** Increased staffing flexibility for activity sensitive positions (i.e. Lifeguards and Restaurant Workers) will produce cost savings for the department. In addition, this flexibility will allow the department to also meet its actual workload demand and productivity targets. Over time, the department aims to convert full-time, low-skill, entry level positions to non-employee benefit job shares that will allow management more scheduling flexibility and reduce departmental staffing costs. If the department is able to place workers where they are needed, and when they are needed, it will result in less waste, a more productive staff, and increased customer satisfaction.